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ABSTRACT

Success for All is a schoolwide program developed by R. Slavin in the late 1980s. It has expanded from a single urban school in 1987-88 to approximately 300 schools in 23 states in 1995-96. The program serves all elementary school students. It relentlessly pursues success for every student, attempts to prevent learning problems, and intervenes immediately when problems do occur. In response to a query from the Superintendent of Schools of the San Diego City Schools (California), a literature review was conducted to provide information about the implementation and outcomes of Success for All. Slavin and his colleagues have conducted a series of studies to compare the reading performance of students at Success for All schools with that of students at nonprogram schools. Research findings reviewed in this report suggest that Success for All is effective in improving the reading performance of elementary school students, especially those in the lowest 25% of their grade levels. Because the reviewed studies provide relatively little information about the design and method of their data analyses, it would be premature to make definite statements about the adoption of Success for All in the San Diego schools. Cost effectiveness data should also be acquired if the district considers program implementation. (Contains one table, two figures, and four references.) (SLD)

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San Diego City Schools
PLANNING, ASSESSMENT, ACCOUNTABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

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LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE SUCCESS FOR ALL PROGRAM

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ASSESSMENT, RESEARCH, AND REPORTING TEAM REPORT

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LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE SUCCESS FOR ALL PROGRAM

Prepared by
Barry Fass-Holmes

February 3, 1997

San Diego City Schools
Planning, Assessment, Accountability, and Development Division
Evaluation Unit
Robert Ryan, Director
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SAN DIEGO CITY SCHOOLS
Planning, Assessment, Accountability, and Development Division
Assessment, Research, and Reporting Team

LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE SUCCESS FOR ALL PROGRAM
February 3, 1997

Issue/Concern

The superintendent has asked whether any achievement data exist for the Success for All early intervention program.

Background/Discussion

Success for All is a schoolwide program developed by Robert Slavin (The Johns Hopkins University) in the late 1980s. It has expanded from a single urban elementary school in 1987-88 to approximately 300 schools in 23 states in 1995-96 (Slavin, Madden, Karweit, Livermon, and Dolan, 1990; Slavin, Madden, Dolan, and Wasik, 1995).

The program's three main goals are to "*relentlessly*" pursue success for every student, *prevent* learning problems, and *intervene immediately and intensively* when problems do occur so that students do not fall farther behind (Slavin et al., 1995). Unlike Reading Recovery (Clay, 1985) which serves *only* first-grade students whose reading performance is in the lowest 20 percent of their classmates, Success for All serves all elementary students.

Some of the key features of the Success for All and Reading Recovery programs are summarized for comparison purposes in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1
KEY FEATURES OF EARLY INTERVENTION READING PROGRAMS

KEY FEATURES	*SUCCESS FOR ALL*	READING RECOVERY (RR)
Setting for instruction	*Schoolwide*	Individual
Eligible grade levels	*Preschool–sixth grade*	First grade (lowest 20 percent)
Allotted time for reading	*90 minutes/day*	n/a
Allotted time for one-on-one tutoring	*20 minutes/day*	30 minutes/day
Length of participation	*Eight weeks*	Successful completion of at least 60 RR lessons (about 13–16 weeks)
Teachers' previous training	*Regular certification*	Regular certification and RR training
Methods for training teachers	*Inservice*	University courses; "behind the glass"
Theoretical basis	*No specific one*	Vygotsky's learning theory

For first-grade students experiencing difficulty in reading, the Success for All program provides one-on-one tutoring by regular certified teachers who have been trained in tutoring strategies and reading assessment during inservice sessions.

To determine the efficacy of Success for All, Slavin and his colleagues have conducted a series of research studies in which they compare the reading performance of students at program schools with counterparts at nonprogram schools. These two groups of schools are matched with regard to their percentage of students qualifying for free lunches, achievement level, and ethnic composition.

The most comprehensive of these studies (Slavin et al., 1995) compares 23 matched pairs of schools on the following indicators: 1) grade equivalents computed on the basis of students' reading scores (Woodcock Reading Mastery Test—word identification, word attack, and passage comprehension, Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty—Grades 1-3 only, and Gray Oral Reading Test—Grades 4-5 only), and 2) effect sizes[1]. These indicators have been reported for cohorts (groups of 50-150 students) at each elementary grade level except sixth grade. (Note: the *same* students presumably have been tracked from year to year, although Slavin et al. do not specify that this is the case).

Slavin et al.'s results show that Success for All has significantly ($p \leq .05$) beneficial effects on reading performance across grade levels. As illustrated in Figure 1, Success for All students in Grades 1-3 perform above grade level while comparison counterparts in Grades 1 and 2 also perform above grade level but *to a lesser degree*. Success for All students in Grades 4 and 5 perform below grade level while comparison counterparts perform below grade level but *to a greater degree*.

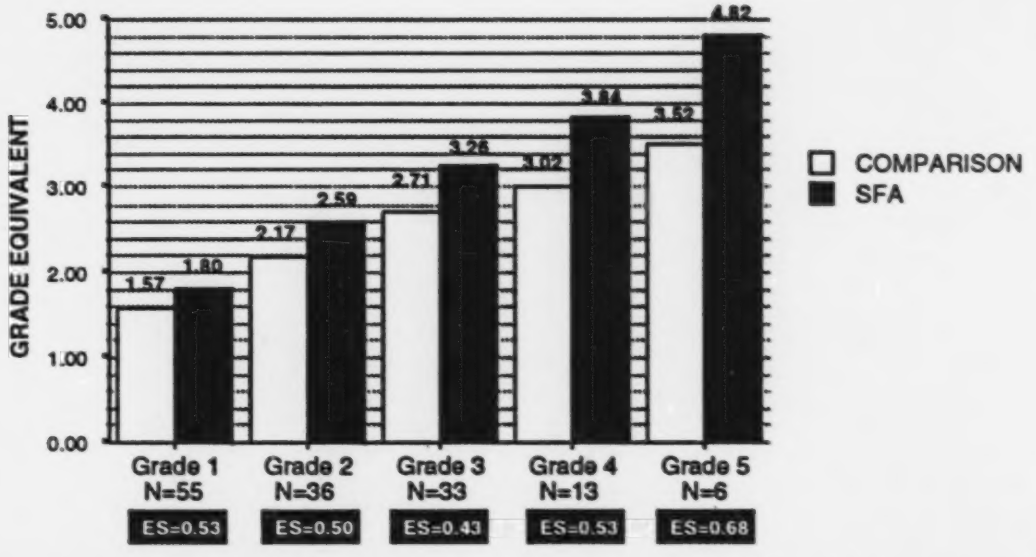

Figure 1. Comparison Between Students at the Success for All (SFA) and Comparison Schools During the Years 1988–1994 (data taken from Slavin et al., 1995). N=number of cohorts. ES=effect size.

[1]Effect size is a statistical term referring to the "true" degree to which a treatment has an effect. It is defined computationally as the quotient of dividing the difference between the mean performance of the treatment and control groups by the pooled standard deviation of the mean.

Slavin et al. (1995) also have disaggregated their data in order to evaluate the program's effect on the lowest achieving students. The results show that Success for All has significantly ($p \leq .05$) beneficial effects on the reading performance of students in the lowest 25 percent of their grade levels. As illustrated in Figure 2, Success for All students in Grade 1 perform above grade level while comparison counterparts also perform above grade level but *to a much lesser degree*. Success for All students in Grades 2-5 perform below grade level while comparison counterparts perform below grade level but *to a much greater degree*.

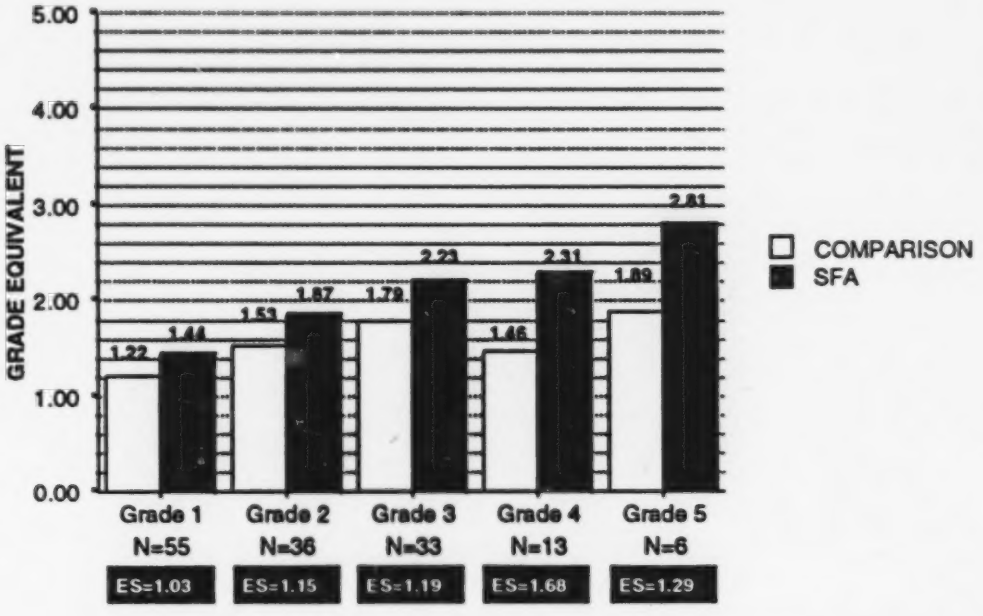

Figure 2. Comparison Between Average Reading Grade Equivalents of Students in the Lowest 25 Percent at the Success for All (SFA) and Control Schools During the Years 1988–1994 (data taken from Slavin et al., 1995). N=number of cohorts. ES=effect size.

A comparison between the effect sizes in Figures 1 and 2 suggests that Success for All has a much greater impact on the lowest achieving students than it does on all students taken together. (Note: Indeed, it is possible that the program has little or no statistically demonstrable impact on students in the upper 75 percent).

In addition to the above findings on indicators of reading achievement, Slavin and colleagues previously have reported substantially lower numbers of retentions, referrals, and assignments to special education at Success for All sites than at nonparticipating sites (Slavin et al., 1990; Wasik and Slavin, 1993).

Slavin et al. (1995) reported no differences in reading performance between Reading Recovery tutored (first grade) students and Success for All tutored (first grade) students in three schools that had both programs (the effect size was zero). These researchers stated that:

> . . . both tutoring programs are highly effective for at-risk first graders. . . . Success for All, which affects all students, has positive effects on all students. Reading Recovery focuses on tutoring and therefore produces its effects on tutored students. These results suggest that Success for All may be most appropriate in schools serving many at-risk students, while Reading Recovery may be the better choice when the number of students at risk of reading failure is small. — Slavin et al., 1995 (page 27)

Data on the cost-effectiveness of Success for All have not been published in recent years (as shown by searches of ERIC's databases). In 1987-88, a pilot school in Baltimore spent approximately $1,000 per student in Chapter 2 funds for this program (Slavin et al., 1990).

Instructional Program Implications

The research findings reviewed in this report suggest that Success for All is effective in improving the reading performance of elementary students, especially those in the lowest 25 percent of their grade levels.

Because Slavin et al. (1995) provide little information about the design and method of their data analyses, it would be premature to make definitive statements about Success for All's efficacy and the benefits that might be gained if San Diego City Schools were to adopt this program.

Facilities Implications

This report does not have any facilities implications.

Budget Implications

This report does not have any budget implications since it does not recommend any actions be taken by district staff.

Public Support and Engagement Implications

Site staffs, governance teams, and school improvement councils might be interested in this report.

Recommendations

If the district considers implementing Success for All, it might be desirable to obtain more detailed information about the program's impact in participating districts, limit implementation in San Diego City Schools to a small number of sites initially, perform a cost-benefit analysis two or three years later, and then assess the merits of retaining and/or expanding the program.

Report prepared by Ruben Carriedo/Barry Fass-Holmes

RC:bf-h

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